ZERO #2
by Ales Kot

PAGE 1

PANEL 1

A map of Ireland back in 1920's, the freshly demarcated border between Ireland and Northern Ireland in red. The rest of the image is black and white.

THE TEACHER (CAPTION): 1920. IRELAND IS PARTITIONED ACCORDING TO THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN LONDON AND DUBLIN. SIX NORTHERN COUNTIES REMAIN UNDER BRITISH RULE.

THE TEACHER (CAPTION): DURING THE NEXT FOUR DECADES, THE AMOUNT OF RELIGIOUS AND OTHER CIVIL DISTURBANCE IN NORTHERN IRELAND RADICALLY INCREASES.

THE TEACHER (CAPTION): EVENTUALLY, OUR TROOPS ARE SENT IN.

PANEL 2

Bloody Sunday. I am leaving you all the space in the world here; all I ask for is an image that is heartbreaking and condenses fifty-two years of conflict and heartbreak and hope into one compact statement.

No pressure. Coloring note: from desaturation to mild saturation. The reds are as red as in image one, though.

Photos: https://www.google.com/search?q=bloody+sunday&um=1&ie=UTF-8&hl=en&tbm=isch&source=og&sa=N&tab=wi&ei=ppjgUcHALYaAiwLr7IHgBg&biw=1821&bih=745&sei=p5jgUZq8MIXJiQL6goDACA

THE TEACHER (CAPTION): 1972: A SO-CALLED HIGH-RISK “CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH” IS PROFESSIONALLY DISPERSED BY OUR TROOPS. CASUALTIES ARE LOW AND THE LARGER THREAT IS NEGATED.

PANEL 3

The Good Friday agreement. Basically this photo:
http://static.bbc.co.uk/history/img/ic/640/images/resources/events/good_friday_agreement.jpg

Coloring note: almost fully saturated now.

CAPTION: 1998.

THE TEACHER (CAPTION): IN AN ILL-ADVISED MOVE TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE TERRORISTS, OUR GOVERNMENT SIGNS THE GOOD FRIDAY AGREEMENT, WHICH IS SAID TO BRING ABOUT A CEASEFIRE.

THE TEACHER (CAPTION): DESPITE THE AGREEMENT, THE COVERT ACTIONS OF THE NORTHERN IRISH TERRORISTS CONTINUE.

THE TEACHER (CAPTION): THEREFORE, WHAT WE ARRIVE TO IS OUR OLD AND WELL-KNOWN RULE OF THE UNIVERSE...

PAGE 2

The teacher. Make her look like whoever you want – the only necessities are: she's British, early forties, looks very intelligent and a bit cold. Avoiding the "teacher with glasses" stereotype would be cool.

THE TEACHER: ...EVERY PROMISE IS A LIE.

Establish the class. Six children. The teacher. School uniforms. Zero, Mina, Robert are described later on the page. The other three kids can look like whatever you want – their age range is 6-10.

THE TEACHER: WHAT IS EXISTENCE?

THE TEACHER: MINA.

Mina, 8 years old. Red hair above her shoulders, a simple and precise haircut she gets every three weeks. She's a beautiful child and you can sense that she will grow up to be a beautiful woman. There's a mix of maturity and intelligence beyond her years embedded within her face – it's the eyes – yet the overall shape of it suggests wild brilliance and happiness of childhood that is somehow yet unbroken.

The words that come out of her mouth suggest that this might be an illusion. Nothing else does.

MINA: EXISTENCE IS A PERPETUAL STATE OF WAR.

CAPTION: MINA. LIGHT OF MY EARLY YEARS.

The teacher refocuses her sights – she's satisfied with Mina's answer because it's the answer they shove into the children's brains. She won't show the satisfaction, apart from a slight nod that is so subtle that it could be overlooked if the children didn't see her do it almost every time someone says the thing she wants them to say.

Same shot as the first panel here, probably.

THE TEACHER: AND WHAT IS WAR?

THE TEACHER: ROBERT.

Robert, 10 years old. He's ten but looks fifty in the eyes. He already killed people but he's still a child. Dark hair, army cut. Brooding. He believes every word at this point.

ROBERT: WAR IS IN OUR BLOOD. WAR KEEPS US ALIVE. WE ARE NOTHING WITHOUT IT.

CAPTION: ROBERT, WHO KNEW HOW TO DRAW THE BORDERS OF EVERY STATE OF THE PLANET ON A BLANK MAP BY THE TIME HE WAS SEVEN.

PAGE 3

Robert, three years earlier, in front of a huge blank map he just filled with borders marking every state on the planet according to the world in 1998. We don't need to show the whole thing – just enough to get a definite understanding of what it is he did. There might be a one or two scratched lines, some of the lines are thinner, others are thicker – but overall? Holy shit, the kid is a prodigy. Almost all of the map is done.

His head turned towards us, the body in front of the map, turned towards it. Hand with a marker still in the air.

He's smiling. He looks much younger here. His eyes look like the eyes of a child. There's enthusiasm in him that is entirely gone in the last panel on previous page. He's looking at us like a child looks at their parents when it wants to be recognized because it knows it achieved something extraordinary.

Art & coloring note: make the panel black and white, maybe with shades of grey. It's a flashback.

CAPTION: WE ALL HAD TO LEARN THAT, BUT HE WAS FIRST. HE LEARNT IT ALL HIMSELF WITHOUT BEING ASKED TO. THEN IT BECAME A NEW TEST FOR EVERYONE.

CAPTION: 1998.

ROBERT: THE MAP IS THE REALITY.

A series of smaller panels than previous, moving between the teacher and Zero. Something like the panels we pulled off with Mike Walsh in Zero #1, page four.

The teacher is looking at us, evidently displeased – tightened lips. Total control and rigidity. No direct outward anger, more like slow-boiling hate that she aims to get the response she wants from the child responsible.

THE TEACHER: EDWARD?

Close on young Zero. He was dreaming while awake.

ZERO: YES?

ZERO (CAPTION): AND ME, YES...

Mina looks at Zero. She knows he's in trouble. The gears inside her head are turning.

Back on the teacher. She's questioning Zero, simply, directly, to the point. Interrogation expert.

THE TEACHER: WHAT WAS THE QUESTION, EDWARD?

Mina is trying to give Zero the answer.

MINA: (insert letters that are clearly too small to be understood – she's trying to give him the answer)

Zero looks her way – only his eyes move. He's aware.

So is the teacher, but she won't let it show. She's looking at Zero, grilling him.

Zero looks back at the teacher. He looks her straight up in the eyes and admits it.

ZERO: I DON'T KNOW.

ZERO (CAPTION): ME.

A series of panels that begin with total darkness – nothing – and then become progressively lighter. Not much, but enough for us to realize that we are in a very tight box that is sealed shut. It's as if our eyes were adjusting to the darkness.

ZERO (CAPTION): THE BOX WASN'T A PUNISHMENT. WE ALL HAD TO DO IT.

ZERO (CAPTION): IT WAS A TEST AND AN OPPORTUNITY.

PAGE 4

A wooden box at the bottom of a river somewhere in England. It's at least 20 feet deep. And it's winter. We don't see the ice at the top of the river, probably, at least not yet.

ZERO: BASIC TRAINING.

Zero, inside the box, looking completely calm.

ZERO: WE ALL HAD TO GO THROUGH THE BOX UNTIL WE MANAGED TO GET OUT OF IT IN UNDER TWO MINUTES.

A different angle. We realize he's in a straightjacket.

ZERO: KIDS DIED, FROM TIME TO TIME. KIDS DIED A LOT. ONLY THE STRONGEST WOULD SURVIVE, AND THEIR DEATHS, WELL, THEY WOULD BE FUEL FOR OUR SURVIVAL...

The sense of claustrophobia is total. It's not making us just slightly nauseated – it's making us straight-up ill. Lee/Ditko in that Amazing Spider-Man issue (is it #29?), Marcos Martin riffing on it in one of the recent covers, Ennis/Dillon doing something similar in Preacher, Steranko's stories, the way Zero applies himself in Zero #2 on pages 8 & 9, Kill Bill, any time you've ever been trapped somewhere tight and feared for your life and air...this is it, this is that condensed into one page.

Use however many panels you wish for, whatever effect you think will convey this the best...

We're above Zero. He looks so calm. He's pondering whether to stay down there or fight his way up. Might be multiple panels here, too, with almost no change in his expression.

ZERO: ...THE STRANGE THING IS, IT FELT GOOD.

ZERO: I LIKED BEING ALONE DOWN THERE.

ZERO: I TOYED WITH THE IDEA OF NEVER COMING BACK UP.

ZERO: MEETING MY PARENTS AGAIN.

PAGE 5

Zero rises from a hole in the ice. We're probably kind of behind him here; his body has no fat, it's all just muscle. He's very wiry. And incredibly cold, but we don't get a sense that it matters to him here, because his body is not shaking at all. He's just rising up, knuckles bleeding but mostly sealed up thanks to the cold water.

Zizek, warm in his winter coat and a tweed hunting cap, is sitting on a chair in front of Zero. One leg across the other, a soft proud smile, he looks like a hard-yet-benevolent grandfather. A big warm-looking blanket is folded across his legs and his hands (leather gloves) are resting on top of it.

ZIZEK: BRAVO, KID.

ZIZEK: YOU JUST MADE THE RECORD.

Zizek gently gives the cold, cold, shaking Zero a blanket, starting to wrap it around him.

ZIZEK: ONE DAY...

We zoom away something fierce, revealing the frozen river, the woods at the end of it and the magnificent English landscape in all its frozen glory as the sky, nearly cloudless, adds to the image in what is both a celebration of a near-impossible human feat and an understanding of the human capacity for feeling alone in the world that is nevertheless very beautiful.

ZIZEK: ...ONE DAY YOU'LL SAVE THE WORLD, YOU KNOW.

PAGE 6

Zero and Mina are hanging off a tree branch, holding themselves only with their feet. The imagery is consciously resonating with the Hanged Man tarot card.

Zero is making a face with his face and hands.

ZERO: WHO AM I?

Mina is looking at him, trying real hard not to laugh.

MINA: A MOOSE.

Zero keeps on making the face. Lips sealed tight so he doesn't burst out laughing himself. It's a lovely moment; a true meeting of souls, and this is far from their first time.

ZERO: NOPE.

She gives up a bit, starts smiling, and it's the kind of smile that is just an unfolding of a much bigger one...

MINA: BUT THE EARS...

Zero smiles a bit, too, mirroring Mina without even realizing it.

ZERO: YOU KNOW.

Mina is thinking really hard about this.

MINA: UM...

Zero gives her a hint.

ZERO: YOU SEE HER EVERY DAY.

Mina just realized the answer. Her eyes grow bigger. She's happy with herself and she can hardly believe Zero is really making fun of their teacher.

MINA: ...MISS MURRAY?

Zero grins. The answer is clear.

Mina grins too. They are mirroring one another.

MINA: YOU'RE AN ASSHOLE.

Silhouettes of Mina and Zero and the tree.

MINA: THE EARS ARE NOT HER FAULT, YOU KNOW.

PAGE 7

Mina goes very serious. She's looking at Zero, sharp, hopeful, as mature as she can be.

MINA: WILL YOU MARRY ME ONE DAY?

Zero licks his upper lip. It's like he's figuring out what the right answer is; not what his answer is.

And he answers, not looking at Mina, but in front of himself.

ZERO: NOPE.

She doesn't wait; she asks. She doesn't seem moved too much – she knows this might not be his actual answer.

MINA: WHY?

Zero, utterly stoical, still looking in front of himself, answers again. He's kind of afraid to face Mina, to look into her eyes – because he could see himself reflected in them and he would know just how much he wants a life where things are easy and love.

ZERO: I'LL BE DEAD.

Mina's eyes are smaller now. She's feeling sadness.

MINA: THAT'S JUST MORBID.

Zero looks at her, finally, regurgitating what he was told without even fully believing it.

ZERO: THAT'S REALITY.

Discussion unfolding. They love discussing things together, clashing and figuring things out; two friendly waves challenging one another.

MINA: ZIZEK SAYS REALITY IS WHAT WE FORCE IT TO BE.

Zero is very serious now, still looking at Mina.

ZERO: YEAH. BUT WE ALL DIE. ESPECIALLY US.

Mina, still looking back at Zero.

MINA: WELL I WANT TO DIE HOLDING YOUR HAND.

PAGE 8

Spring. We wouldn't know it, though; we're in another class, this one darkened, full of computers. Remember it's 2001: still, these are high tech machines for that time period. The kids we have seen – and maybe a few more – are all playing whatever equivalent of Call of Duty we can conceive of. All of them have headphones that are almost bigger than their heads.

ZERO (CAPTION): WE PLAYED VIDEO GAMES SIX HOURS PER DAY FOUR DAYS A WEEK. 3D SHOOTERS, USUALLY. GOOD FOR REFLEXES. GOOD FOR LEARNING HOW TO NULLIFY OPONENTS WITHOUT ASSOCIATING THEM WITH HUMAN BEINGS.

Summer. We're outside. Zero is holding his arm. It's broken. It's clearly broken. The Krav Maga instructor, a man in his early thirties, Armenian-looking, short haired, angular, calm, is looking at him without remorse, no longer in a fight stance; he knows the boy won't get up any time soon.

Zero's left arm is broken near the wrist; he's holding his arm with his other arm, and we can see the bone sticking out, some blood. Zero's teeth are shut together and bared in a desperate attempt to control his response. Tears are a sign of weakness. He's staring at the broken bone.

The instructor is dressed in simple black pants. No shoes. Zero is in white pants. Otherwise the same. Nothing on top.

ZERO (CAPTION): ANY MENTION OF ATTRACTION OR LOVE WAS PUNISHABLE.

ZERO (CAPTION): WE WERE NOT “BOYS” AND “GIRLS” – WE WERE SOLDIERS AND THE WORLD NEEDED US TO BE FULLY FOCUSED ON OUR TASK.

Autumn. Zero, his arm still fixed, is slicing the neck of a chicken with a kitchen knife. Next to him, on her knees, meticulous, Mina slices the neck of her own chicken for today. Plenty of chickens in the cages; small cages, tight cages. Well-fed chickens, yes. Caged chickens, yes. The external mirroring the internal, everyone being a caged chicken in their own way.

Zero's arm is still healing – it's still fixed up. He's using it as if it didn't hurt at all.

ZERO (CAPTION): YOU WANT TO FINISH THE OBJECTIVE? YOU FINISH IT.

ZERO (CAPTION): YOU WANT TO EAT MEAT? YOU KILL IT.

ZERO (CAPTION): AND YOU HAVE TO EAT MEAT EVERY DAY.

PAGES 9

12 panels.

Zero bites into the chicken thigh while looking straight in front of himself. He's sitting in a darkened room, by himself, at the end of a long day. It's a lean chicken meat – no fried stuff.

ZIZEK: THE WORLD IS AN AWFUL PLACE AND THIS IS WHAT WE DO TO SURVIVE AND THRIVE IN IT.

Zizek, partially in the dark, partially illuminated by the projector. Almost a Two-Face like effect, but not as symmetrical. He's calm, measured, not trying to impose something he doesn't believe in; he's sincere.

ZIZEK: IN ORDER TO STOP EVIL, WE HAVE TO BREAK IT.

And he goes on.

ZIZEK: IN ORDER TO STOP EVIL, WE HAVE TO TARGET IT AND DESTROY IT.

His eyes are intense, yet measured. He's not letting all the energy out at once – he knows precisely how much of it he needs to let out in order to get his point across.

ZIZEK: AND ONE DAY, WHEN WE KILL THEM ALL...

ZIZEK: ...THE WORLD WILL BE A BETTER PLACE FOR IT.

Three panels in one. We establish the room; it's nothing but a chair, the projector, Zizek, Zero. The projector projects a face on the screen; it's partially juxtaposed with Zizek's body, as if they were in some way connected. The man looks quite similar to Brendan Gleeson. A dad, a family man, someone who clearly made bad decisions in the past but nevertheless feels very homely and pleasant.

The photograph is relatively fresh, clearly taken from some distance but with an excellent film camera. It's Connelly looking away, mouth slightly open, a normal day. He's closing the door of a car, unaware of the camera aimed at him.

ZIZEK: THIS IS KEIRAN CONNELY.

Detail of Zero's mouth and teeth chewing the chicken.

ZIZEK: KEIRAN CONNELY USED TO BE THE HEAD OF ONE OF THE FRACTIONS OF THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY – AND NOT THE KIND OF TOSSERS WHO JUST PRANCE AROUND TOSSING LEAFLETS AND SINGING THEIR BLOODY ANTHEMS.

Another photo of Connelly – this one has been taken ten years ago, and it's black and white. It's when he got arrested and documented. A simple black and white photo. Remember, we're in the UK – this ain't the classic US prison photo, this is a simple b/w picture.

Connelly looks more fit and more vicious in this picture. Looking straight at us.

ZIZEK: IF WE ARE TO BELIEVE HIM, HE IS COMPLETELY DISCONNECTED FROM HIS PAST. HE'S NO LONGER INVOLVED IN VIOLENT ATTACKS ON OUR CITIZENS, HE SAYS.

Close on the projector and the light it projects.

ZIZEK: WE DON'T BELIEVE HIM BECAUSE KEIRAN CONNELY IS A WANKER WHO IS PERSONALLY RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATHS OF MORE THAN TWENTY OFFICERS OF OUR GREAT COUNTRY.

Back on Zizek. Same conviction, same manners. Efficient, convinced, not feeling like a religious zealot but more like an intelligent man who simply understands the situation – precisely the way he likes to think of himself. Whether that is true or not is another matter entirely.

ZIZEK: WE DON'T BELIEVE HIM BECAUSE BASTARDS LIKE HIM NEVER STOP.

PAGE 10

16 panels.

Zizek, face now within the screen entirely, a strange effect that feels almost psychedelic...

ZIZEK: I HAD THIS DOG ONCE...

He bites his tongue a bit, looks down, going back in time.

ZIZEK: ...AND IT WAS A GOOD DOG, YOU KNOW? IT LOVED ME AND I LOVED IT.

ZIZEK: BUT IT ALSO HAD THIS IDEA...

Zizek looks back at us, at Zero.

ZIZEK: ...THIS IDEA THAT ALL OTHER DOGS WERE ITS ENEMIES.

Zero. He's listening now, intently so. We see the kid in his eyes, still. He doesn't know what comes next.

ZIZEK: WE'RE TALKING ANY DOG.

The screen goes blank. It's just Zizek again, illuminated by the light.

ZIZEK: INNOCENT. VIOLENT. BIGGER. SMALLER. BARKING. YAPPING. QUIET. DIDN'T MATTER ONE BIT.

He asks us, he asks Zero – and the thing is, he's really asking, it's not just a rhetorical question. He's not underestimating this kid. He's taking him as his equal in the conversation.

ZIZEK: DO YOU KNOW WHY?

Beat. Zero. Looking at Zizek, thinking about it. Thinking hard, muscles in his face not moving.

He answers. Facing Zizek straight, knowing it's the best thing to do.

ZERO: NO, SIR.

Side shot. Zizek in front of Zero, not too close, just close enough to be heard clearly. Zero is sitting, looking up at his face. Zizek is looking down at Zero's.

Zizek explains. We can tell there's sadness and kindness in him.

ZIZEK: THE DOG WAS SCARED.

He looks to the side a bit, a tick he's got, something that comes when he can no longer face himself in the eyes of others...

ZIZEK: IT WAS PARANOID. NOW, BEING PARANOID DOESN'T MEAN THEY ARE NOT AFTER YOU, BUT IN THIS CASE, THIS DOG...

Close on Zizek's eyes, wandering.

ZIZEK: ...THE WHEELS GOT LOOSE. AND IT THOUGHT IT JUST HAD TO WATCH OUT, CONSTANTLY. IT HAD TO KILL THEM BEFORE THEY KILLED IT.

Close on the chicken bone on Zero's plate. Stack of them. All almost completely clean, except for a few pieces.

ZIZEK: THE POINT IS, THE DOG WAS FUCKING SICK.

Zizek. His lips, face tight. He's partially transported, back there. He's wearing an armor; it's holding the boy inside.

ZIZEK: SO I KILLED IT.

Zero, looking up at him, listening. There is a sense of his features mirroring the progression of Zizek's face; the gradual hardening of it in the previous panel is reflected in the slight hardening of Zero's child face. His eyes show a child.

ZIZEK: AND THE WORLD?

Zizek is looking at us, at Zero. He says it. He believes it.

ZIZEK: IT'S A BETTER PLACE FOR IT.

PAGE 11

Quiet suburb in Belfast. Google image Belfast house / suburb will give you a lot of useful images. What we're aiming for with the Connelly house is something like this, but slightly rebuilt, with bigger windows, still traditional.

CAPTION: BELFAST, NOVEMBER 21ST, 2001.

CAPTION: DAY ONE.

The family, having a breakfast. A beautiful, happy family dynamic. Nothing cliched about it. Traditional Irish breakfast, too, but the kids are having Nutella toast. The kids are having tea and cocoa respectively. The parents are having coffee.

Connelly is a kind dad. Taryn Connelly is a kind mom. She's pretty – dark curly hair, sensitive features, early forties, slightly overweight. Eyes that look tired but are actually full of radiant joy. The kids (girl and boy) are kind kids, age seven and ten.

We will be playing up the contrast between the family's kindness and Zero's loneliness. They are in open, safe spaces. He is in tight, uncomfortable spaces. This continues throughout.

One of the kids is chewing their Nutella toast. It's the younger one – face smudged with the hazelnut crack of gods.

The mom looks at the kid with her eyes only, sipping coffee. We catch a smile.

Connelly looks at the kid too, stuffing his face with sausage and egg. He looks vaguely dismissive of the whole Nutella thing, but not in a negative way. He's half-amused by it, half-fake-annoyed.

CONNELLY: FRIGGIN' HAZELNUT CRACK.

Taryn gives him a stinky eye. Her tone is comforting, non-threatening, decisive.

TARYN: LANGUAGE, BIG MAN.

Connelly gives her a look. It's half-sheepish, half-loving. His smile is meek and knowing, loving, slightly guilty.

The other kid grins.

Zero is stuck in the closet, dressed in simple black clothing, looking through it at the family, one hand on the closet door. He's careful not to show himself in any way, yet we get a sense that a part of him wants to show himself very much. The other, conditioned part...is ready to do what it came to do.

PAGE 12

Connelly passes the closet, post-breakfast, caressing his slightly grown beer belly. We see this first from the outside, then from the inside, with Zero watching Connelly as he passes by.

ZERO: I COULD EXECUTE RIGHT NOW, BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT.

Connelly close to us, the closet and the hall/kitchen behind him.

ZERO: THE POINT IS STAY PUT.

Zero in the kitchen, dishes next to the sink freshly washed. He's looking through the window – the kids are playing outside, Taryn is reading a book, lying on the grass. It's a pleasant Autumn day, one of the last warmer ones.

ZERO: THE POINT IS DON'T BE SEEN.

Connelly is cleaning the drains outside, standing on a ladder. The house door is open. He left it open, probably. We don't see inside.

ZERO: THE POINT IS DON'T GET CAUGHT.

Zero sitting inside the closet, hiding behind a pile of shoe boxes, quietly reassembling his gun. It's night now. There's nothing on his feet – so he can't be heard.

ZERO: THE POINT IS WAIT THREE DAYS. THE POINT IS SHOW YOU CAN DO THIS.

ZERO: THEN ELIMINATE THE THREAT.

PAGE 13

16-panel grid.

1-4: Establishing shot: the Connelly house.

CAPTION: DAY TWO.

5-6: Mikey, the older kid, is sitting on the floor, slightly upset. Kit, the girl, is playing with a Lego car that is obviously Lego technic, therefore originally given to Mikey...more Lego pieces and such around, some books, overall a nice room and they both still live in one room together. Taryn is looking at them, reading the situation calmly.

MIKEY: SHEDOESN'TLETMEPLAYWITHMYLEGOSHE'STAKINGITAWAYALLTHETIMEIWANTMYOWNROOMALREADY

7: Taryn crouches, facing Kit, who is not paying attention, very much focusing on slowly disassembling the Lego car. Mikey's looking at them, slightly annoyed and pouting.

TARYN: WHY IS THAT, KIT?

8: Closer on Kit. She's pulling the "I'm cute and not even here" spiel.

KIT: NOT HIS.

9: From Kit's POV: Taryn gives her a genuinely confused look. It's slightly exaggerated.

10: From Taryn's POV: Kit looks at her, giving her a slightly confused, slightly innocent look. She at least partially gets that what she's doing is questionable.

11+12: From outside the opened door, so the panel is framed by them, as if we were Zero, standing outside...Taryn is calm and gentle, every word going right where it needs to go.

TARYN: WE'RE A FAMILY, KIT.

13: Taryn points a finger at Mikey while talking to Kit. She's guiding her, gentle, motherly, yet firm.

TARYN: HE'S YOUR BROTHER. YOU'RE HIS SISTER. YOU SHARE THINGS.

14: From behind Taryn, so we can see the kid's faces – Mikey is looking down now, while Kit is looking at her, almost reverent, because she loves her mum and knows she's right...

TARYN: EVERYTHING IN THIS HOUSE...

TARYN: ...IT'S OURS. IT'S FAMILY.

15: Zero, standing in the door, barely visible, watching. Impending doom; yet fragile somewhere deep down, we know that much.

TARYN: WE'RE ONE UNIT, GET IT?

16: Shot from above: Taryn, Kit, Mikey. The Lego car between them.

TARYN: THERE'S LOVE OR THERE'S NOTHING.

PAGE 14

Montage.

Breakfast again. Content daily routine. Mostly quiet happiness.

CAPTION: DAY THREE.

Taryn is washing one of the kid's head in the bathtub. Door's open so we can see in.

Keiran is reading to the kids while they are tucked in their beds. One lamp on, right next to him – and he's sitting on the floor. The kids are listening, calmly excited.

Keiran and Taryn are smoking a joint on their bench behind the house, drinking Guinness. Zero is standing behind them, in the shadow, most likely in the door frame, a quiet, compact monolith of murder.

PAGE 15

Bedroom. Night. Taryn is dressed in nothing but knickers and a blouse, hair down, folding down the clothing and putting it into a drawer next to the wall. She's ready to go to sleep, tired and smiling. Keiran is washing his teeth in the small bathroom, the door to which is directly in the bedroom, so we can see him, naked, brushing his teeth in front of the mirror.

TARYN: YE LEFT YER UNDERPANTS ON THE TABLE AGAIN, CONNELLY.

We're in front of her as Connelly comes close, reaching around her and holding her close. His eyes closed, he's inhaling her, nose close to where her neck and head meet. She's closing her eyes, too, content and excited. There's passion between the man and the woman; it's a safe, passionate affair interlaced by deep kindness and love.

CONNELLY: AND YE LEFT YER KNICKERS ON FOR SOME REASON.

Taryn turns her head closer to him; they're angling for a kiss. Her eyes still closed, she whispers

CONNELLY: LUV.

His hand sliding underneath her underwear, on her butt cheek.

Connelly's POV: Taryn says yes without saying yes. She doesn't have to. Her eyes, her face are love.

They kiss.

PAGE 16

Keiran is awake. Taryn is still asleep. The premonition, the dread within the image...it's strong.

CAPTION: DAY FOUR.

Zero is standing inside the closet now; the gun in his hand. We are behind him and we get the sense of a monolithic monster; of the man he is about to become, of all that is coming. The image feels like soulless evil waiting to make a move with its puppet. There's a silencer on the gun now.

Taryn kisses Keiran on the cheek as she leaves the door with the kids; they're going to school and she's going to work. She's a teacher. It's the kind of a kiss people give and receive with a smile because they remember last night and because there is nowhere else they would rather be now.

She's driving off in the car. Keiran is holding his hand up, waving without waving, a light smile on his face. All he's wearing are his shorts. He's totally hairy, of course.

Keiran closes the door...

...and walks into the kitchen. The coffee is still hot. The newspaper is on the table. There's a toast with Nutella on it right next to the newspaper and the cup of coffee, and right underneath it is a drawing of some sort, something the kids must have stuck there...

Keiran is looking at it, wondering, slightly bewildered by the obvious joke the kids and/or Taryn played on him...

PAGE 17

Kieran is looking at the drawing – it's him eating the nutella toast, crudely and adorably drawn by the younger kid.

UNDERNEATH THE PAPER: IT'S CHOCOLATE AND HAZELNUTS AND WE LOVE IT SO TRY IT MAYBE
WE LOVE YOU DAD

KEIRAN: YE SILLY MUPPETS.

We're behind Connelly as if we were watching him. He's still standing, now grabbing his cup of coffee...

Carlyle (nineteen years younger than in #3 – use that for reference and then age him backwards), standing on a hill nearby the residential area, watching the road about half a mile away, a road that leads towards a highway, binoculars in one hand, a keychain of some sort in the other and a big empty dark bag next to him...

Zizek, on a far away beach, talking into his cell.

ZIZEK: THE OPERATION IS A GO.

Carlyle presses the button. It's not a keychain – it's a trigger.

PAGE 18

Close on the Connelly family in the car, front shot. They all look pretty content. The older kid is talking to the mom, who is listening. The younger kid is reading a comic book.

Back to Carlyle's point of view, same as on previous page, probably. One of the cars on the road is exploding; and we know which one.

Zero slams the closet door open.

Aims at Connelly, who is just about to turn his head towards him, the cup already starting to drop from his hand...

And shoots three times. Zero's eyes are so far removed from reality he's not even in the building. This is just him going through the moves he learned.

SFX: THWIP THWIP THWIP

PAGE 19

Connelly manages to jump away; the bullets still almost get him. One goes through the window, two in the wall. Close range.

Connelly looks behind; we're in his face, not seeing what he's seeing, but we get that he's surprised.

CONNELLY: SHITE

Connelly runs up the stairs...

...and into the bedroom.

He slides towards the bedroom table on the side. Opens it. Grabs the gun.

Then he realizes something.

He ejects the mag.

It's empty.

PAGE 20

Connelly reaches underneath the mattress, holding it with his other hand.

CONNELLY: SHITE SHITE SHITE

The door is open. No-one there.

He grabs the CZ-75 he had there. He checks the mag.

Zero missed it. It's loaded.

The door is open. No-one there.

Connelly is up; we're in front of him...he's slowly progressing towards the door, just a few steps away from the bedroom table, the gun at the ready, eyes pinned at the empty space, trigger finger ready...

And then Zero appears in the door, gun aimed and ready, no remorse, no waiting.

SFX, black panel white sfx or the opposite: THWIP THWIP

PAGE 21

Connelly, thrown on his ass against the wall/bedroom night table, grinning in pain and eyes widened in disbelief, a hole in his shoulder and another one in his arm, some blood sprayed on the wall above him but not much, his gun pointed at Zero...

CONNELLY: SHITE...

CONNELLY: ...YE JUST A WEE BOY...

He's a man. He did bad shit and he knows it. He owned up to it and he's ready to die, if the need be, but he would rather be damned than ever kill a child. He lowers the gun and he tells Zero, with absolute sincerity in his eyes, with hope that Zero's life will somehow turn around:

CONNELLY: I DON'T KILL BOYS.

Zero is pointing the gun at him.

Zero starts to lower the gun.

Carlyle, outside, on the hill, ready to shoot from his sniper rifle, finger putting pressure on the trigger.

PAGE 22

The bullet enters Connelly's head from the side and puts his brain and blood on the wall. He looks – he doesn't understand. His eyes are looking at Zero, who is out of the picture, this probably being a closeup...the eyes are full of soft, gentle, genuine understanding. This man saw way too much pain to not show this misguided kid some kindness.

Zero, in shock; not only because of the kill itself, but because the underlying kindness and goodness translated between them. He saw something he was told did not exist in this person at all.

PAGE 23

Zero is driving back, alone, on a bus full of people. He looks lost; he looks alone; he's sitting alone; his eyes are alone. He is receding into himself.

Same angle. Time has passed and we are somewhere else, but the angle stays the same because it signifies no change in Zero's state. He's still in shock. Here, he's in a shower, that same look on his face, water flowing all over his face and chest as if is trying to take off the trauma. Despite the water, his eyes are open.

Zizek and Zero are sitting on a bench in a park. Zero is looking down. Zizek is looking in front of himself, slightly hunched, wondering how to get through to the kid. There's space between them, enough to see that they are each sitting in their own bubble, yet it's also clear that Zizek could be sitting much further should he decide not to engage with Zero.

Autumn leaves. Empty park. Early evening. A lamp is on already. Oranges and blacks and greys.

Zizek breaks the silence.

ZIZEK: WANT TO TALK ABOUT IT?

Zero turns his face to Zizek. He looks...devoid of any emotion. It's scary. He looks like someone who just burned out, a child that was possessed and all that's in there now is the remains of it, broken pieces that will never fit. The tone of Zero's answer is not sad or annoyed or anything else; there is no emotion at all. It's a question that sees no answer.

ZERO: WHAT'S THERE TO TALK ABOUT?

He's looking straight into our / Zizek's eyes, and we get the sense that yes, this kid understands he is dead. He's a zombie.

ZERO: I FAILED.

ZERO: I'M DONE.

PAGE 24

Nine panel grid here, I think.

Zizek cleans his teeth with his tongue, mouth closed, mulling words.

Eyes down, he talks to Zero. We get a sense of shame in Zizek – he is not entirely comfortable with what is happening, with what he's doing.

ZIZEK: IT CAN BE HARD TO KILL A MAN.

Side shot of Zero's face. He's looking in front of himself again. And he believes what he's saying – or at least a vast majority of him does.

ZERO: HE WAS A TARGET. NOT A MAN.

Zizek is genuinely surprised by Zero's response, and he's also almost repulsed by what he's doing. He's looking at Zero now.

We zoom a bit away, getting both in the shot. Zero is looking in front of himself, still, Zizek is looking at him, searching for words, a bit lost in what he's trying to do, a bit lost in who he actually is...

ZIZEK: NO, HE WAS...

Same shot, although maybe we flip it here? Your call. Zero turns to Zizek again. He asks him, with those blank eyes, with the monotonous voice;

ZERO: ...WHAT?

Zizek ponders the answer. What does he say to the poor kid? That it mattered? Does he tell him to run? Does he keep on doing what he's doing? Why is he doing it? What's the right thing to do? What's the safe thing to do?

Shot of them both on the bench, looking in front of them. They both look burned out now, resigned to their fates.

ZIZEK: ...NOTHING.

Same.

ZIZEK: HE WAS NOTHING.

PAGE 25

ZERO #4: I REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE

CREDITS

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ALMOST NO TRAINEE KILLS THE TARGET DURING THE FIRST MISSION. THEREIN LIES THE IMPORTANCE OF A HIGH-RANKING OFFICER PRESENT IN THE FIELD, OVERSEEING THE ENTIRE OPERATION FOR THE ENTIRETY OF ITS COURSE.

(FIELD BROCHURE 3-FP, 1998 EDITION)